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SPEECH

OF

MR. AUGUSTUS C. DODGE,

DELEGATE FROM IOWA,

ON

THE OREGON QUESTION.

DELIVERED

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1846.

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THE OREGON QUESTION.

The Resolution from the Committee on Foreign Affairs, requiring the President to notify Great Britain of the intention of the United States to terminate the joint occupancy of Oregon, and to abrogate the convention of 1827, being under consideration in Committee of the Whole—

Mr. DODGE addressed the House as follows:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I hope that the resolution now under consideration will pass. It is the first of a series of measures looking to the assertion and maintenance of our rights to the northwest coast of this continent; all of which will, I trust, receive the early, prompt, and favorable action of the present Congress. The time has come when the public voice demands action upon this Oregon question—the greatest question, in my humble estimation, of the day. It is one which, to a greater or less extent, has agitated the mind of the people of this nation for more than a quarter of a century, and upon which, in the recent presidential election, they have spoken in a voice not to be misunderstood.

The people are, sir, upon this question, as they have always been on all great questions, immeasurably in advance of the politician and the legislator. The former demand action, efficient and decided action; the latter hesitate, and are afraid of consequences. If, unfortunately, war should grow out of the exercise of our "clear and unquestionable rights," the people, whose blood and whose treasure will be expended in that war, say, "let it come." This I sincerely believe to be the voice

of nine-tenths of the American people, and I know it to be the united voice of those whom I represent. They are a frontier people, and prefer peace; but they are brave, and will ever be found ready to vindicate their rights, and those of the nation; nor will they, when these are assailed, ever stop to inquire whether it be by *Great Britain* or weak and divided Mexico—whether the foot of the hostile invader treads upon southern or northern soil. They will march as readily and as cheerfully in defence of the one as of the other.

Sir, if any apology were necessary why I have departed from the usual course of Delegates upon this floor, which is, not to speak upon questions other than those relating immediately to the Territories from which they come, it must be found in the intense interest felt by the constituency that I represent, and by myself, in the passage of this resolution, and its other kindred measures—the bills to grant lands, erect forts, &c., all having for their object the occupation and settlement, by American citizens, of the territory of Oregon. I feel, sir, that I should but poorly reflect the views and feelings of those who have placed me upon this floor, and do injustice to my own, should I fail to raise my voice, feeble though it may be, in support of these measures; and, as I estimate their importance, it is to me a melancholy reflection that I can do no more than *speak* in favor of their passage.

Mr. Chairman, I trust that it may not be regarded as inappropriate in me so far to digress from

the subject immediately under consideration, as to advert to a transaction which had its origin in this hall at the last session of Congress, and which may have an important bearing upon the ultimate fate of this great American question. It will be remembered, sir, that at that session of Congress the Territory from which I come, having then much more than the requisite population, presented to this House a constitution *præmissively* republican in all its features, and asked admission into the Union upon an equal footing with the original States. In the first article of that constitution were defined the chosen boundaries of the people of Iowa for their future State. They were good, because they were natural boundaries. The great rivers—Mississippi on our east, the Missouri on our west, and the Saint Peter's on the north, with a short artificial, but direct line, connecting the two last-named rivers—were the everlasting State divisional lines upon which we had fixed, and which are so plainly indicated by the hand of nature, that to adopt others is a manifest interference with her designs. They embraced, as I am now officially informed, but about fifty-seven thousand square miles—ten thousand less than were given by a common parent to our sister Missouri; and made our proposed State less than Virginia, Georgia, Missouri, and Michigan, and about the size of Illinois. What, under these circumstances, had we a right to expect? Admission, with the boundaries of our selection, as every other new State had been thus admitted. Not so, sir, however, was the result. And against the solemn protest of the humble Delegate who now addresses you, our long-cherished boundaries, at one fell blow, were stricken from our constitution, and a set of artificial lines imposed upon us, which, until then, we had never dreamed of, and to which the people of Iowa are opposed. Well, sir, what may be the result of this act? And to that I wish to ask the attention of *western* gentlemen, and the friends of Oregon everywhere. If rumor be not sadly at fault, I say to them that they have, by depriving themselves of two votes from Iowa in the other end of this Capitol, periled the fate of a most important portion of the American continent: they have incurred the risk of losing Oregon, with her six hundred thousand square miles of territory, or a large portion thereof, while *squabbling* with Iowa, their youngest sister and neighbor, for a few hundred. One among the many gratifying results which I anticipate from the certain possession of the whole of Oregon by our Government is, that the people of Iowa will be allowed the boundaries for which they are so anxious. I tell gentlemen that, whether we want elbow-room in Iowa or not, we are in earnest in desiring State-room.

But, sir, to return to the question immediately under consideration. I regard the notice to Great Britain of our intention to dissolve the convention of 1818, which was indefinitely continued by that of 1827, as highly expedient and proper. It is, as we would express it in the West, removing the *underbrush*, which is in the way of the buildings we intend to erect. These conventions have worked great benefits to the English, and nothing but injuries to us. But for them, the English would not now have the shadow of foundation upon which to

rest their unjust and ridiculous pretensions to the ownership of the territory in question, or to any portion of it.

Mr. Chairman, the whole of Oregon is ours—ours from first discovery and from first settlement, strengthened by a cession to us of all the claims of France, Spain, and Russia. But it is not my purpose to discuss the title. I am willing to let it stand upon the impregnable grounds upon which it has been placed by our present talented Secretary of State, [Mr. Buchanan,] and by his able predecessor, [Mr. Calhoun;] their arguments in support of our title, with those which have been made in both Houses of Congress during the present and previous sessions, for more than a quarter of a century, have never been answered, and in my humble estimation never can be by the advocates of the British title.

The truth is, sir, that no other Government in Christendom than that of Great Britain would have the hardihood to stand up and press a claim to territory, resting upon pretensions so flimsy as those upon which hers to the country in question are based. And in the name of God and the people I represent, I say, let us neither be tricked nor bullied out of our territory. Let us then move forward. The eyes of the country are anxiously turned towards the present Congress; and I tell gentlemen, unless this notice is passed and followed by the other measures recommended to us by the President, that those who shall assume the responsibility of defeating them will find, too late, that they have incurred the lasting displeasure of their country.

Mr. Chairman, a very large proportion of the population of Oregon has gone thither from Iowa, and I have, from sympathy and association, a feeling of strong attachment for them, and for the pioneer in whatever part of the country his lot may be cast. You may imagine, then, sir, the feelings of astonishment and regret, not to say indignation, with which I listened to the extraordinary, unjust, and unjustifiable attack of the gentleman from Virginia, [Mr. PENDLETON,] upon the people of the western States and Territories generally, and those of Oregon in particular. I allude to the sneering manner in which he spoke of President Polk's recommendation to "facilitate emigration to Oregon," and to protect our "patriotic pioneers who are there."

The gentleman from Virginia calls these pioneers "restless and wayward wanderers." He says:

"Gentlemen tell us of the attachment of these people to their dear native land. Why do they leave it, sir? Why is it that, with instinctive aversion, they retire before the advance of civilization, preferring the wild excitement and the rugged discomforts of the wilderness to the repose, the security, and the refinements of social and cultivated life? They manifest their attachment by disregarding the influences that bind ordinary men to the places of their nativity, by snapping recklessly the ties of blood and kindred and social connexions, and calmly and of their own free choice, deserting a generous soil and a genial climate. Abandoning the hearths and the altars of their childhood and youth, they toil through a vast and cheerless wilderness, to gain a home so inhospitable and rude, that, according to the learned influence from Philadelphia, it takes the genius of Shakespeare to do justice to its horrors." * * * "It is not the policy of our Government to be running over the world looking after citizens whose allegiance is manifested only by acts of expatriation."

Again, the same gentleman says: "I protest

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'against their right (the western States) to decide 'when we are to go to war for this miserable and 'worthless territory.' The attack upon the value of Oregon is, sir, but a repetition of the federal slang which was applied to the whole Mississippi valley when it was purchased under the name of Louisiana, in 1803, by Mr. Jefferson. Yes, sir, the Mississippi valley, of whose extent, of whose fertility and innumerable advantages, it is unnecessary at this day I should speak, was, by the enemies to its acquisition, denounced as "a bog wilderness filled with savages, outlaws, and runaway negroes," and it was said it was only fit to be kept as "an untrodden waste for owls to hoot and wolves to howl in!"

The lugubrious predictions of the enemies of Oregon will fall as far short of realization, should it be thrown open to American enterprise, as have those which were made by the Federalists against Louisiana. Carry out the measures contemplated by the bills to which I have referred, connect the trade of the Columbia and the Pacific coast with that of the Missouri and the Mississippi, and you will open a mine of wealth to the shipping interests and to the whole country, the extent and value of which the most sanguine now under-estimate. Of the advantages which we will derive from the Chinese and Asiatic trade, which will thus be thrown open to us, I can do no more than allude. Our proximity to those ancient and densely populated portions of the Old World—the nature and exuberance of our productions, which are necessary to feed their starving millions—will enable us to carry on a commerce with the people of those countries in articles that will purchase their manufactures and products at better profit than gold and silver.

I regretted, sir, to hear a Representative from good old Virginia—the State of Washington and Jefferson, the State whose unparalleled munificence has done so much, in time past, to extend the area of freedom—thus attack the men who are engaged in that great work. Sir, the gentleman's charge of "expatriation"—"of snapping recklessly the ties of blood and kindred and social connexions"—applies with equal or greater force to the Pilgrim fathers and to the early settlers at Jamestown in his own State, and to those of our ancestors who branched off in different directions from these, the first pioneers to America. Has the gentleman from Virginia so soon forgotten the process by which and the sort of men by whom his own noble old Commonwealth was peopled—ay, sir, how this whole continent has been settled? The first charter granted by King James, in 1606, to Virginia, limited the settlements to one hundred miles in the interior. In subsequent acts of a similar character these boundaries were somewhat extended. But soon we find the authority of the Crown interposed to prevent "the restless and wayward wanderers" of the "Old Dominion" from settling west of the Alleghany mountains, which proved, like the efforts of our own Government at a later period, to be altogether a vain attempt. To use the words of a celebrated writer, "the ball of empire was rolling to the West," and no power of any Government could check or stay its progress. And it is a melancholy fact, the truth of which is engraven upon every page of

western history, that the Government of the country—and I say it with feelings of the deepest mortification—has, to a very great extent, manifested towards the advancing pioneers of the West much of that unnatural hostility and indifference which the gentleman from Virginia has so boldly proclaimed. A glance at that history will attest the truth of what I say, that the great work of extending the empire of this country has been effected by the people, in opposition to the Government. Yes, sir, by "men with Federal halters around their necks." Kentucky was settled by Daniel Boone in 1773. This extraordinary man and his few noble and adventurous companions occupied the "dark and bloody land" in violation of the proclamation of George III., issued ten years before, and defended it for sixteen long years with their own blood and treasure, and laid the foundation of its present high state of improvement and grandeur. Sir, the representation of Boone which is seen over the door of your Rotunda opening into this Hall, is truly emblematic of the man and men by whom the western country has been settled.

Tennessee was settled at a subsequent period, contrary to the express order, both of this Government and that of North Carolina; and I believe it is a portion of the history of those times, that Governor Sevier, a gentleman of great enterprise, high integrity and honor, was even outlawed for having the boldness to go beyond the limits assigned to the people by their Government. The Tennesseans, like the Kentuckians, were hard pressed by the numerous and warlike Indian tribes, who then inhabited the country which now constitutes their State. During twelve years of Indian warfare—from 1780 to 1792—with the merciless scalping-knife and war-club suspended over the heads of their wives and children, they in vain besought the Federal Government for help and protection, but none was afforded them; and their own expeditions against the Indians, who had attacked their settlements, were often recalled by orders from the Government. In violation of the commands of Congress, the brave and patriotic Tennesseans swam the river that gives name to their State, three-quarters of a mile in width, in the dead hour of night, shoving their arms before them on rafts, and fought the battle of Nickajack, memorable in Tennessee history for having given permanent peace to their frontier settlements. This campaign, I say, was, in legal acceptance, a lawless invasion on a friendly tribe of Indians, resulting from the refusal of Congress, as the Journals show, to furnish military aid for their defence.

The appropriate and eloquent allusion which was made by my esteemed friend from Illinois, [Mr. R. SMITH,] to the gallantry, perseverance, and indomitable courage, tact, and skill, of that greatest of all partisan warriors—George Rogers Clark, who was so appropriately termed the Hannibal of the West—renders it unnecessary that I should attempt to add anything to what has been said, and so well said by him, in regard to the early history of Illinois. Nor need I repeat the sufferings, privations, and dangers which her early settlers, unaided by the Federal Government, were compelled to encounter. This duty has been performed by my friend, the ever-faithful and un-

tiring Representative of the district which was the theatre of these early exploits, and in which there are many persons now residing who participated in them.

A more recent example is afforded us in the settlement of "Boone's Lick," the finest, fairest, and most fertile part of the magnificent State of Missouri. The Boones, the Coopers, and many other enterprising individuals, advancing beyond the few French and Spanish settlements that then dotted the western shore of the Mississippi, sought the district of country of which I am speaking, and occupied it contrary to the wishes and authority of this Government, and defended themselves, but not without the loss of many valuable lives, against numerous attacks of powerful and hostile tribes of Indians by whom they were surrounded.

Northern Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa, were also settled under like circumstances. I may say of my nearest relative, as was said of Governor Sevier, he, too, was pronounced an outlaw by the officers of the Government. The first official documents I ever remember to have heard read, were read at my father's log cabin, by the officers and agents of the United States, to himself and neighbors, who had assembled to hear them. They were mandates, commanding us in the name and by the authority of "Uncle Sam," not exactly to disperse, but to withdraw from the country in which we had then settled, under the general pains and penalties of the law in such case made and provided; but more particularly of expulsion at the point of the bayonet. But, sir, we did not go.

We treated the officers with every civility in our power, and informed them that any other order they might issue, than one to abandon the premises upon which we had settled, should be promptly obeyed. Owing to our interior position, and the rigors of the climate, at the time of which I now speak, these settlers were not marched upon by the regular soldiers, but maintained their position. Many of them now own the land upon which they were then squatters, and the country is densely populated—the inhabitants having defended it, through two Indian wars, are now industriously engaged in developing its resources, both agricultural and mineral.

Not so fortunate, however, were my immediate constituents who settled Iowa six years afterwards. These hardy and adventurous men from the east side of the Mississippi, who had lost the entire spring and summer in defending themselves, their wives and their children, from the incursions of Black Hawk and his followers, and who had led the van in every encounter with those Indians, sought to explore the rich mines and settle the valuable lands of Iowa. The power and arms of their Government were immediately directed against them; and I have now in my eye a gallant and esteemed friend and talented Representative from the State of Mississippi, [JEFFERSON DAVIS,] who was then an officer in the army, and at the head of a military force, expelled some three hundred of my constituents from the spot where now stands the city of Dubuque, with a population of nearly three thousand inhabitants. It was to my friend the performance of an unwelcome duty, kindly and courteously executed by him, for his sympathies

are all with the frontier people, and I calculate most certainly upon his vote and influence to grant pre-emption rights to those whom he was thus constrained to drive from their homes, and of which they have never yet had an opportunity to become the purchasers. [Mr. Davis nodded assent.]

The first settlers of Burlington (now one of the largest towns north of St. Louis) were driven off, and their houses thrown down and burnt by officers of the Government, although the country had then been purchased, but the treaty not yet ratified: thus showing that the people must forever await the tardy action of Congress. Similar scenes of opposition and persecution attended the settlement of the "Lovely Purchase" in Arkansas, the "Platte Purchase" in Missouri, and, more recently, the Des Moines settlements in Iowa. And so it has ever been, that those holding authority, whether royal, imperial, and, I am sorry to add, or republican, all seem to have taken upon themselves the exclusive privilege of thinking for the people, of checking the progress of population in one direction, and fixing boundaries to it in another. This disposition of Government has checked emigration; but, thank God, despite all opposition, it has rolled steadily onward until it has reached the Pacific and the Rio del Norte, and legislation being unable to stop the career of the people, has slowly and reluctantly followed in their footsteps.

Sir, as I before said, the Oregon emigrants are but acting precisely upon the same principle which has directed the progress of population from the time that our ancestors first landed in Massachusetts and Virginia, down to the date of the latest settlement on this side of the Rocky mountains; and if they be guilty, who are innocent? Sir, the American pioneer is impelled onward by the strongest motives to human action—the consideration of bettering his condition; and still more, that of benefiting his children. And what, I ask, has been the result of this process of "expatriation"—this "snapping recklessly the ties of blood and kindred, and social connexions?" It has brought into the Union fifteen new States, with two more soon to follow, in a space of time covering but fifty-three years; and it has increased the population from three to twenty-five millions. What more, sir, has it done? It has reclaimed an almost boundless wilderness from the possession of savage beasts and still more savage men, and reduced it into fruitful fields and cultivated lands. Carrying with them the Bible and the plough—the two greatest civilizers of mankind—the pioneers in their westward march have facilitated improvement and dispensed comfort, happiness, and blessings around them. Sir, I envy not the feelings of that man who regrets the transformation of the extended and gloomy forest, or the dull monotonous prairie, which hide within their bosoms all that is necessary to the subsistence, comfort, and wealth of man, into a land teeming with millions of enterprising freemen, industriously engaged in developing its hidden resources, and thereby making it the theatre of man's highest destiny on earth!

Sir, if ever there was a prayer, deep, solemn, earnest—if ever a supplication which should find an instantaneous response in the hearts and acts of an American Congress, it is that which was read at

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Mr. Cha foundation Pacific, is In addition the distance from the Oregon—the over which with nume first settle tend with daunted fi pose can children, to sand, man circumstance Governme utes, whic try, have time and Governme an army of marched and, it is fertile vall one hund the last ye

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your table, at an early day of the present session, from the American citizens now settled on the coast of the Pacific. These people, sir, "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh," have gone thither under the pledged faith of this, the Government of their choice, that theegis of our laws would be extended over them, forts built for their protection, and liberal grants of land made to them. For, situated as they are, these measures are of the utmost moment to them.

Mr. Chairman, to plant a colony and to lay the foundation of a State or States on the coast of the Pacific, is an enterprise of no ordinary character. In addition to the natural difficulties arising from the distance which our emigrants have to travel from the settled portions of the country to reach Oregon—the wilderness character of the region over which they have to pass, infested as it is with numerous and hostile tribes of Indians—the first settlers of any country have always to contend with innumerable obstacles, which only undaunted firmness of mind and constancy of purpose can overcome. These men, women, and children, to the number of from seven to ten thousand, many of them in extremely indigent circumstances, unaided by the powerful arm of their Government, and in violation of its penal statutes, which forbid them to enter the Indian country, have accomplished that which it has been time and again asserted, on this floor, that the Government of the United States could not do with an army of paid and mounted soldiers. They have marched to the Pacific, maintained themselves, and, it is stated on good authority, raised, in the fertile valleys of the Columbia and the Willamette, one hundred thousand bushels of surplus wheat, of the last year's crop.

Behold the germ of a mighty empire which has burst into existence, as it were but yesterday, and constituting an integral portion of our favored land! Shall it remain uncared for—unprotected—and be, by our studied neglect and cold-blooded indifference, lost to us? I trust not, sir.

I speak thus feelingly, Mr. Chairman, in support of the claims of our settlers in Oregon and in vindication of the characters of the western pioneer, being excited to do so by the ungenerous sneers and unmerited attack of the gentleman from Virginia, and also by the remarks of my friend [Mr. HUNT] from New York, on the "lawless" character of the frontier population.

Sir, I reiterate, that from sympathy and association, my feelings of attachment to the frontier population are strong. Were they otherwise, I should be wanting in the finer and better feelings of man, false to all the obligations of duty and gratitude, and traitorous to the land of my nativity. For I was born in a territory west of the Mississippi river, and have resided through my whole life among that people who inhabit the extreme frontier. I am now thirty-four years of age, and have never, as yet, had a voice in the election of a President or other officer higher than the one I now fill.

I have lived many years of my life without the jurisdiction of magistrates or law of any kind. Yet, let my friend from New York know, that even under these circumstances we administered justice and respected the laws of God. And I assure

him, that had he been there, he would have seen, that although officers and a penal code were wanting, when a murder or other felony was committed, a jury was empanelled, and if the accused was found guilty by his peers, a gallows was erected and he hanged. Debts were collected as regularly as they now are; and law, by the common consent of the people, was virtually enforced.

Mr. Chairman, comparisons are said to be odious. I will not, therefore, attempt to draw any between the people of the old and new States, however advantageous to the latter I may think the contrast would be. Sir, Daniel Boone, of whom I have before spoken, was the type—the imbodiment of all the marked characteristics of the frontier men; and being so, I can with confidence appeal from the character which the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. PENDLETON] has given them to the general estimate which mankind have awarded to their great prototype. It was but a few months since that a deputation of grateful Kentuckians (amongst whom was the eloquent John J. Crittenden, who did justice to his memory) visited Boone's humble grave in Missouri, whence they bore his bones, to deposit them in the place of his early home—in the once "dark and bloody land" of his younger days, now the flourishing and populous State of Kentucky.

Lord Byron, in speaking of Boone, in his early settlement in the West, says:

"Crime came not near him—she is not the child
Of solitude; health shrank not from him—for
Her home is in the rarely-trodden wild.

He was not all alone: around him grew
A sylvan tribe of children of the chase,
Whose young, unawaken'd world was ever new.

And tall and strong and swift of foot were they,
Beyond the dwarfing city's pale aborigines.

The present case in point I
Cite is, that Boone lived hunting up to ninety;
And what's still stranger, left behind a name—

For which men vainly decimate the throng,—
Not only famous, but of that good fame

Without which glory's but a tavern song—
Simple, serene, the antipodes of shame,
Which hate nor envy e'er could tinge with wrong.

Mr. Chairman, I know well the vast, the fearful odds that I must encounter in shivering a lance with the talented and eloquent gentleman from South Carolina, [Mr. WOODWARD], who has just preceded me, and whose argumentative and impassioned speech, I admit, did honor to his head, however erroneous I may and do believe his views to be. That gentleman, after a sort of general indictment of those whom he styles his opponents for their "declamation and interminable discourse upon our title to Oregon," &c., asks, in a strain of great apparent indignation, "Who, sir, denies that we have rights in Oregon, or that they must be defended? Who desires the country to fall into the hands of the British? Who is opposed to its settlement? Who is not ready to vote all such laws as may be essential to the well-being of our people there?" Sir, the gentleman from South Carolina has scarcely not paid that attention to the debate on Oregon that some others have, or he would not have asked all these questions. I know of no one in either House of Congress who has asserted that

we have no "rights in Oregon," or who has expressed the wish that that country should fall into the hands of the British; but I do know, sir, "who are opposed to its settlement," and "who are not ready to vote such laws as may be essential to the well-being of our people there." The two distinguished Senators from the gentleman's own State, [Messrs. CALHOUN and McDEVITT,] neither, as I understand, doubting the validity of our title, and one of them having made a most conclusive argument in its favor, are both opposed to the settlement of the territory in question, and are not ready to vote such laws as may be essential to the well-being of our people there, unless a "change has come o'er the spirit of their dreams," which, I fear, is not the case. They both spoke and voted against Dr. Linn's bill, which made provision for these things, and *did not interfere with the question of notice at all.* One of them, [Mr. McDEVITT,] in a speech delivered but two short years since on the floor of the Senate, in speaking of Oregon, said:

"Why, sir, of what use will it be for agricultural purposes? I would not, for that purpose, give a pinch of snuff for the whole territory. *I wish to God we did not own it; I wish it was an impassable barrier, to secure us against the intrusion of others. Who are we to send there? Do you think your honest farmers in Pennsylvania, New York, or even Ohio or Missouri, will abandon their farms to go upon any such enterprise as this? God forbid. If any man who is to go to that country under the temptations of this bill, was my child—if he was an honest and industrious man—I would say to him, For God's sake, do not go there; you will not better your condition; you will exchange the comforts of home, and the happiness of civilized life, for the pains and perils of a precarious existence. But if I had a son whose conduct made him a fit subject for Botany Bay, I would say, In the name of God, go. This is my estimate of the importance of the settlement.'*"

Language such as this, sir, and coming from a source so distinguished, and followed up, as it has been, by the opposition of South Carolina to this question, in almost every shape in which it has made its appearance, may serve to account for some of the notices that have been taken of the course of her Representatives in both Houses of Congress, and under which the gentleman and his colleagues seem to be so restive.

Nothing was done, says the gentleman from South Carolina, throughout five Administrations, towards abrogating this convention; and whilst he eaches, in part, the policy of masterly inactivity, which, he says, it has suited the purposes of gentlemen to represent as a South Carolina scheme, he remarks, "I am proud to be able to say, that there is no other difference between General Jackson and ourselves, on this subject, than this: while he was not only unwilling to give the notice himself, but opposed, also, to the enactment of any laws for Oregon which might induce Great Britain to give the notice, we are opposed to notice only, and are in favor of laws; while he declined both to give notice or to take the risk of receiving it, we are prepared to take that risk."

I was rejoiced to hear the gentleman say that he was prepared to take the risk of extending our laws over Oregon—for this is, in fact, the kernel of the whole matter. His sincerity and willingness to do what he has avowed, I doubt not; and I hope that the term "ourselves," is intended to embrace, not only his colleagues on this floor, but

those in the other wing of this Capitol, whose votes are so highly essential, but I fear will never be given, for any measure looking to the occupation and settlement of Oregon. But let us see if the gentleman and his colleagues are entitled to the credit of being as good Oregon men as General Jackson was. He says that the Jackson party of 1828 voted down the bill of Governor Floyd. I do not know, sir, how this may be, as I have no means of arriving at the political opinions of those who gave that vote, which was certainly not a party vote. But, sir, going back to a period of time several years anterior to that of which he speaks, I find that on the 1st of March, 1825, General Jackson voted in the Senate of the United States for a bill taking military possession of Oregon; establishing a custom-house at the mouth of the Columbia, and a territorial government, as soon as a census, which it was proposed to be taken, should show that there were two thousand inhabitants in the territory. But, says the gentleman, the Administrations of General Jackson and Mr. Van Buren pursued the policy to which South Carolina now adheres, and nothing was said in condemnation of its wisdom and propriety; but suddenly there is a tremendous excitement which has sprung up in regard to Oregon. The vote of General Jackson, to which I have referred, and his whole policy in regard to the acquisition of territory, and his known devotion, which was equally entertained by Mr. Van Buren, to the western pioneer, forbid a doubt as to what were their views on this question. But why, sir, did not these illustrious men move in this matter? Why did they not feel some of that excitement which now animates the great American heart? It was because there was not at that time an American settler in Oregon; and now, sir, there are from seven to ten thousand, imploring protection upon our own soil, against a powerful, overbearing, and murderous British Company—I mean the Hudson's Bay Company—which, in the last twenty-five years, has incited the numerous fierce and warlike savages of the mountains to kill and scalp from eight hundred to a thousand American citizens, lawfully engaged in pursuing the Indian trade. But, sir, I will give a further answer to the gentleman's question, by asking him one, which I think is in point. Why did not General Jackson, as President, when the gallant young republic of Texas had risen in her strength, and thrown off the shackles of the dictator, Santa Anna, who had trampled her constitution under his feet, and forced her people to assert their independence, which, with their own good rifles they achieved, and afterwards asked to be admitted into the American Union;—why, I ask, did he not favorably receive their application and recommend their admission? Can any one doubt that his feelings and sympathies, then warmly aroused by the cruel and atrocious manner in which the Mexicans had conducted the war, were on the side of Texas and her admission? I answer, none will dare to do so; and yet he did nothing to favor it, and actually declined her advances! Who can doubt that his course in this matter was influenced by a desire to let public sentiment act upon the question? His subsequent course furnishes the answer and the proof.

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teney of Presidents—great and mighty as was the one of whom I am now speaking—or Cabinets, or Congresses, to settle great questions of this character, only so far as they reflect or are backed by the will of the people. Sir, we have had denunciations from the Whig side of this House loud, long, and strong, against the resolution adopted by the Democratic convention at Baltimore in favor of the reannexation of Texas and the reoccupation of Oregon. The Democratic party has been charged with dragging our foreign relations into the late Presidential election, for party purposes, &c. Now, sir, I was proud of that resolution, and regarded its introduction and adoption as highly proper; and I will tell gentlemen, if they give the question now before us the go-by, that they will find at the next Presidential election, not Demos its only, but Whigs resolving in favor of Oregon. No man or party will be able to make even a decent race before the people of this country unless his and their views on this question are known to be in favor of Oregon—the whole of Oregon.

Sir, as I have before said, Texas was repulsed even by Old Hickory and a Democratic House and Senate when, in 1837, she first asked admission, and that, too, after she had planted the tree of American liberty so deep in her luxuriant soil, and moistened it so thoroughly with the blood of Travis, and Crockett, and Fannin, and a thousand others, that its life and growth was beyond the possibility of a doubt. But, sir, look at the part which this same immortal man acted in reference to this very question at a subsequent time. What Democent, at least, has forgotten the pleasure with which he read, during the late Presidential canvass, each successive letter written by Andrew Jackson from the Hermitage in favor of the admission of Texas? These were documents not emanating from him as President, but as a citizen of Tennessee, a voter of this proud Republic. Nor, sir, in rousing up the noble spirit of his countrymen to thwart and circumvent the designs of English diplomacy upon the important portion of the Valley of the Mississippi of which I am speaking, did he forget to admonish them of the necessity of looking to our rights on the Pacific, which he said we should maintain at the cannon's mouth. His patriotism knew no bounds. Western soil was as dear and precious to him as southern, or northern, or eastern. Texas annexation and admission has been triumphantly and happily consummated; and I tell gentlemen, that nothing had so great an influence in carrying that question as the fixed determination of the American people to resist British rapacity and British domination upon this continent.

Mr. Chairman, I am not one of those who believe, or would insinuate, that there was a bargain, as some have alleged, between the respective friends of Oregon and Texas, that they were to be carried *pari passu*; for as has been truly said by some gentlemen from the West, we went for Texas because we wished to see her in the Union, and believed that it was right that she should be admitted. But, sir, I remember well when western members came here, in 1844, full of hope that with their increased strength under the new apportionment, (Dr. Linn's Oregon bill having passed the Senate, and been lost in this House, at the preceding session,) they

would be enabled to carry this, their darling measure, without doubt.

A member from Missouri [Mr. HUGHES] offered a resolution, "declaring it as the opinion of this House, that we had a clear and indisputable title to the whole of Oregon, and that it was the duty of Government to take possession of its territory on the northwest coast, &c." And a gentleman from Georgia, [Mr. BLACK], distinguished for his zeal in support of the re-annexation of Texas, immediately moved, as an amendment, "that it was expedient, and conducive to the best interests of the country, that Texas should be re-annexed as soon as it could be accomplished upon fair and legitimate principles;" which was accepted by the mover of the original resolution. From that time on to the meeting of the Baltimore convention, in which the subjects were again united, as they were throughout the whole Presidential canvass, it seemed to me that there was a union and common understanding between the friends of each, which could not but be highly conducive to the success of both.

Mr. Chairman, by way of consolation to some gentlemen, who seem to have gotten into rather an awkward position upon this question, and who are very restive under the dread of the application of party screws, I ask them to call to their recollections the manner in which a preëminently distinguished member of the Democratic party [Col. BENTON] was assailed during the last Congress for his course on the Texas question. All the hell-hounds of party were let loose upon him. Not because he was opposed to the measure—for he had been its earliest friend, and had invoked the curses of Heaven, as far back as 1820, upon the heads of the men who had consented, by the treaty of 1819, to dismember the valley of the Mississippi; but to the particular form in which it then came before Congress; or, in other words, to the Tyler treaty. Yes, sir, "Old Bullion," who, from time whereof the memory of man runneth not to the contrary, had been the very Ajax Telamon of the Democratic party, was to be read out of it, for daring to prefer one mode of doing the thing to another; and from no portion of the country were these denunciations against him more fierce or intolerant than from South Carolina. All who were here remember the manner in which he was from day to day assailed by a paper ("The Spectator") understood to be the South Carolina organ at the seat of Government; and also, the attempt that was made in the other end of the Capitol, by one of the Senators from that State [Mr. McDuffie] to read him out of the party, in consequence of his [Col. Benton's] non-adherence, as was alleged, to the Baltimore resolutions in favor of Texas. All this, mark you, sir, was the consequence of objections to the particular form in which the subject was then presented; for he, (Benton,) when it came up in another shape, spoke and voted in favor of the measure.

Mr. Chairman, I have been astonished, in looking at the debates upon this question, to see the manner in which the same ground has been travelled over and over again, from 1820, the time at which Governor Floyd, that pioneer in the Oregon movement, first brought forward his bill, to the

present. Why, sir, a comparison of Floyd's bill, with the discussions upon it, and the bills and discussions of the present day, show that we have not only not been *progressive* upon this question, but that we have actually retrograded; and all, sir, all owing to our dread of giving offence to Great Britain. As I have before stated, Floyd's bill (a copy of which I now hold in my hand) provided for taking military possession of the country, establishing a custom-house at the mouth of the Columbia, and a territorial Government, as soon as there were two thousand inhabitants, (there being at that time none,) over whom it was to operate.

The far-seeing and enthusiastic Doctor Floyd, though regarded as visionary by some, and by others as a bold projector, continued for ten long years, (from 1820 to 1830,) to press upon Congress, at each successive session, this his favorite measure; and though often defeated, he had the satisfaction, towards the close of his Congressional career, to see his bill passed by this House by yeas 111, nays 58. And it is rather a singular coincidence that a gentleman of the same profession, (Dr. Linn,) who came into the Senate years after Dr. Floyd had left this body, should have taken up the same subject, pressed it with the same untiring ardor and zeal on the attention of the Senate for the same length of time, and to precisely the same result—its triumphant passage through the Senate. But, sir, what is most mortifying to me is the fact, now staring us in the face, that no such bill as either Floyd's or Linn's can now be passed through either branch of Congress, and we are almost afraid to give the simple and peaceful notice itself. How altered is the voice which now comes from the "Old Dominion" to that which was spoken by Floyd, to whose memory, in consideration of his early and constant devotion to their section of the country, I trust the people of Oregon will erect a monument. [Mr. FICKLIN, of Illinois, spoke out and said: "They should call their seat of government after him." Yes, sir, or name one of their States in honor of him.]

But, sir, it is not the voice of Virginia only on this question that is now changed. I find that, in January, 1823, even little Vermont, the "Green Mountain" State, was willing to look "John Bull" full in the eye. Yes, sir, willing and anxious to maintain the great interests of the country, and especially to look after the *fishing* interests in the direction of Oregon. Twenty-three years ago, in the discussion of this bill in this House:

"Mr. Mallary, of Vermont, said, he was opposed to the proposed amendment. He thought that Congress should take the responsibility of directing the occupation of the territory, and not place it on the President. It was not to be supposed the President had more information than is in possession of the House. It would be very extraordinary that this measure should be suffered to progress for weeks, and yet some deep reasons of State should remain undisclosed. For one, Mr. M. said, he was willing to meet the proper responsibility of his station, and not cast it off on any other department. He wished an occupation, by military force only, with some encouragement to settlers. The establishment of a civil government was unnecessary until there were people over whom it might be exercised. As it respects the occupation of the territory in question, Mr. M. said he was decidedly in its favor. The advantages it would afford to the fisheries, to commerce, and to the fur trade, had been most clearly shown. We are at peace with the world. Our means are abundant. Should we be hereafter engaged in war, a place of security would be provided

for the millions of property we should have on the Pacific. Some thought the measure visionary—too hazardous for Americans to undertake. How often are we reminded of American enterprise? It is made a constant boast; and yet we appear to be alarmed at the idea of occupying our own domain! The smallest nation of Europe would not fear the undertaking; yet we are fearful it is beyond our power. Portugal, small as she was, did not hesitate to plant her colonies in every part of the world. Russia, with her capital in the centre of Europe, enclosed with walls of ice one half of the year, extends her colonies and commerce to every continent; and yet, with all our enterprise, we dare not venture beyond the Rocky mountains. This subject occupies a great share of public attention; it is anxiously looked for; the interest and enterprise of the nation requires the adoption of the proposed measures. * * *

"Mr. M. said his feelings were not much excited by the subject. The passage of this measure would secure the possession of that portion of our dominion to ourselves, and prevent an encroachment upon it by others."

I especially commend the extract which I have read from the admirable and statesman-like speech of Mr. Mallary to the consideration of the present Representatives from Vermont, and especially to the gentleman [Mr. Foor] who discoursed so eloquently last evening in opposition to the "notice," and so vividly held up before us the horrors of war with which it would seem he apprehends we are soon to be visited, unless we "lay low and keep dark."

This discussion, mark you, Mr. Chairman, was in 1823, but five years after the treaty of joint occupancy had been entered into, and to show that Great Britain had no claim at that time to the soil or jurisdiction of Oregon; and that the convention of 1818 was only designed to confer upon her some commercial privileges, such as the navigation of the waters, trading with the natives, &c. I find that *none of those who then opposed the bill of Dr. Floyd, did so on the grounds of interference with British rights in any shape.* Mr. Tracy, of New York, made a long and able speech in opposition to it, from which I will read an extract to prove what I have said, and I ask the especial attention of gentlemen to it, that it may be seen how the opponents of Oregon have shifted their ground:

"He believed that he should succeed in satisfying the House that there was connected with this scheme no objects of national advantage which would justify the very considerable expense which experiments must occasion; and that the country generally, but peculiarly the mouth of the Columbia, afforded none of those attractions with which the fancy of the gentleman had decorated it. But, said Mr. T., if I had not thought that this measure involved consequences of more importance than the useless waste of a few thousand of dollars, however Utopian the views of its advocates might have appeared to me, I should have rested my opposition on a silent vote against it; but it does seem to me that this bill involves a principle of great national consequence—a principle which he was sure this House was not prepared to establish, without, at least, pausing to reflect on its nature and importance; I allude, said Mr. T., to the principle of colonization which is contained in the bill. * * *

"Military posts should be placed for the purpose of protecting an existing frontier population, but not for the purpose of attracting our population to an exposed situation. Its natural tendency is to diffuse it. Its limits are already sufficiently large; as it becomes more dense it will extend them; but it is not the true policy of the Government to invite its dispersion. * * *

"Another important inducement which is urged for the adoption of this measure is the influence which a settlement on the coast would have to quiet the preposterous claims, and prevent the dangerous encroachments of the Russian Government. The gentleman had dwelt much on the extravagant and ridiculous pretensions which had been advanced by the Russian Minister, in his correspondence with our Government on the subject of this country. Mr. T.

said that he apprehended the idea of enforcing abstract ap presenting and to show to wild and shall take sion, can be hostility ag garrison at nor avenge.

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said that he believed no gentleman could entertain a serious apprehension that the Emperor of Russia had ever thought of enforcing these pretensions. He believed they were the abstract speculations of a diplomatist, who had no object in presenting them but to amuse his master by his ingenuity, and to show his own adroitness in defending fanciful titles to wild and unoccupied territory. * * * Any step which he shall take to enforce this most absurd and unjust pretension, can be regarded as nothing less than an act of direct hostility against us; but it will be an act which a pitiful garrison at the mouth of the Columbia can neither avert nor avenge.

"Mr. T. said he was ready to admit that neither England, Spain, nor Russia, had the right, or probably would have the disposition, to complain of the measure. But he was sorry that his colleague had forgotten that although neither of these nations had a right to object, there was a people who had: he alluded to the present inhabitants and true proprietors of the country. The Indians of that coast, he had heard, were numerous and warlike, and he did not believe they would regard with complacency a military establishment among them. He had no doubt but it would involve us in a war with them."

Thus, sir, in 1823, *red skins* were held up to frighten us from the occupation of Oregon—now, *red jackets*.

Sir, it has been said, in many portions of the country, and broadly intimated at the commencement of this debate, that gentlemen from the West were anxious for the adoption of this notice, because, if war should be its resulting consequence, they would be out of all danger, and would have the opportunity of growing rich upon the misfortunes of their country. I repel the charge. I repel it, as being myself a western man, and a native of the State of Missouri. When and where has it happened in the history of this country, that her rights have ever been assailed, and her soil threatened by an invader, that the men of the West have not come to the rescue, and poured out their blood like water in the nation's defence? I ask gentlemen, who put forth a charge so unfounded, to call to mind the events of the last war with Great Britain, and those of the Florida war. Sir, Richard H. Gentry, of Kentucky, then a citizen of Missouri, who had stood side by side with Colonel Richard M. Johnson at the battle of the Thames, upon an intimation that their services were needed, rallied around him a regiment of gallant volunteers, and marched from the confines of Missouri to the swamps and fastnesses of Florida, there the theatre of savage warfare in all its horrors. I ask gentlemen to remember that man and his brave followers bore themselves in the battle of Okeechobee, fought in Florida on the 25th of December, 1837. Sir, they marched upon the enemy, who, though concealed from view, were known to be strongly posted and lying in wait to deliver a deadly fire upon the advancing column. At the head of that column, sir, with his face to the enemy, and animating his men on to the charge, the heroic and lamented Gentry fell, perforated with bullets, in the arms of death, one-sixth of his entire command being either killed or wounded. Among the latter was his son, (Harrison Gentry,) whose conduct, like that of his sire, is so honorably mentioned in a public order of the brave and just old General Gaines. Sir, do facts like these furnish no evidence that, should war come, gentlemen would find the people of the West by their side whenever it was required to present a front to the foe. Sir, to defend ourselves against an accu-

sation so monstrous, we can appeal to the battle-fields of the Raisin, the Thames, of New Orleans, and to the bones of the Missourians—once my friends and neighbors—scattered through the hammocks and everglades of Florida: they attest our fidelity to the Union and to every portion of it.

Sir, an insinuation was thrown out here by a gentleman from South Carolina, [Mr. RUIETT,] that the demand to maintain the national honor came with a bad grace from men who, in private life, did not themselves recognise the binding force of honor's code; and who would condemn to a felon's grave the man who, in private combat, defended his honor.

[Mr. HOLMES here interposed. He said his colleague was not present, but it was due to him to say, that that gentleman never had meant to insinuate that gentlemen in the West did not recognise the laws of honor to their fullest extent. Mr. H. had found the same feeling on that subject in the West which prevailed in the South; and it was of as much strength there, as anywhere else in the country.]

I do not know what scope the gentleman intended his remarks to have; as I understood him, they embraced the West. And I am glad, on account of the personal respect which I have always entertained for him, to hear this disclaimer from his colleague. I did not, of course, understand the remark as having any personal application to me, or it would never have been noticed here; and I had only this to say, that, whilst I do not esteem it a matter to be boasted of, there are some portions of the West in which as much chivalry, even of this sort, has been displayed as in any part of the world. And if duels be the proof, I have yet to hear of the spot upon which more of them have been fought—closer, better fought—than upon "Bloody Island," in Illinois, opposite to the city of St. Louis.

Mr. Chairman, so far as my constituents and myself are concerned, I can truly say, that we have ever entertained and cherished towards the southern section of the Union, feelings of the most friendly description. My associations with southern gentlemen here and elsewhere, have been of the most pleasing character. Opposition to this measure, in which I feel so much interest, comes from the North as well as the South. I cast no imputation on those who oppose it—they act under the responsibility that they owe to their constituents and country, and, I doubt not, conceive they are doing their duty. I trust they will award to us the same integrity of purpose, and will not, as rumor, with her thousand tongues, has done, attribute our course, on this occasion, to a mere disgraceful scramble for the Presidency. Sir, we scout and trample the insinuation under our feet.

But justice should be done here to a distinguished statesman from the West, [Mr. BENTON;] portions of whose early speeches in support of our rights on the Pacific I was astonished to hear quoted by gentlemen opposed to Oregon. When that eminent man said that the god Terminus had planted his foot on the top of the Rocky mountains, as a limit to the boundaries of our Republic on the West, it should be remembered that the

great "South Pass" through those mountains had not then been discovered; that distance had not then been annihilated by the application of steam. Sir, that man's pen was employed, even before his entrance into public life, in pointing out the immense value of our possessions on the northwest coast, and the blessings and benefits that would result to our Government and people from its occupancy and settlement. His first speeches on entering the Senate were made in vindication of our title, which, in his masterly manner of argument, he established beyond all doubt. He did

more, sir. Having proved our title to be "clear and unquestionable," he said that we were accountable that republican and not monarchical institutions should be planted upon it; and with that sagacity for which he is so remarkable, he predicted, twenty-five years ago, that unless we acted promptly and efficiently, we would have to fight the British for the mouth of the Columbia. And to show how far he was in advance of the men of that time, both his colleagues [Messrs. Barton and Bates] spoke and voted against Oregon.

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